

A METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR SPONSORED
ACCESS TO THE INTERNET BY CLIENT MACHINES

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to the field of network browsing, and more particularly to a method and system for sponsored access to the Internet by client
5 machines.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The parting century has seen tremendous growth in radio, television and press as media for news and
10 entertainment for a common man. Access to information via radio and television is totally free, while the cost of a printed newspaper is heavily subsidized to make it affordable for every common man. All this has been possible because of the advertisements that are run on
15 these media, the revenue from which, support the delivery of these services to the users, who would have otherwise paid the full price of subscribing to these services. Without advertising, radio and television would not have become an integral part of the modern human race.

20 As the world prepares to enter the next millennium, computers are increasingly entering into homes to become household gadgets. Modern computers are not just capable of performing the routine computing needs, but also, the functions of conventional media, telecommunication and
25 business transactions. Internet is the worldwide network of computers, which has seen explosive growth in the last several years. Internet access through a personal

computer is rapidly increasing in popularity. It is estimated that there are currently 180 million users worldwide.

This phenomenal growth has been attributed largely
5 to the introduction and widespread use of "web" browsers, which allow for simple graphical user interface (GUI)-based access to network servers. The network servers are high end computers, which host databases and other repositories of information in the form of
10 documents formatted in Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML), which are called as "web pages". Such HTML documents or web pages are accessed from the network servers by client browsers, utilizing a known application protocol, the Hyper Text Transfer Protocol (HTTP). The "World Wide
15 Web" (WWW) is a collection of servers of the Internet that utilize HTTP for transfer of files, which can be in different formats such as text, graphics, images, sound, video, etc. using HTML, the standard page description language.

20 An HTML web page may specify link to another web document via a Uniform Resource Locator or "URL". An HTML compliant client browser, on activation of a URL, makes a TCP/IP (Transport Control Protocol/Internet Protocol) request to the server identified in the link
25 and receives a "web page" in return, which it displays on the computer by interpreting the HTML. Many different browsers have been developed for accessing the Web, which include the Mosaic, the Netscape Navigator, the Internet Explorer etc. Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer
30 are the two most widely used browsers. Netscape and

Internet Explorer are registered trademarks of Netscape Communications Corporation and Microsoft Corporation.

The popularity of the World Wide Web is basically because of the amount of information available on the web sites hosted by the Internet content providers such as America Online, Yahoo, Infoseek etc. Most of this information is free of charge to users of the Web. Such services support themselves by selling advertising space on their web pages, in the same manner that commercial spots are sold by radio and television broadcasters. The advertising on the Web has evolved over the years, and has achieved significant technological sophistication in presentation and performance. There is significant prior art in Internet related advertising improvisations, but these relate to the advertising on the web page, which is displayed in the browsing window of a web browser. The revenue of such advertising goes to the content provider.

Although the user accesses the information free from the web, he or she still has to pay the ISP for access to Internet itself. ISPs charge the user for providing the access to Internet. User subscription is the principal source of revenue for the ISPs. Hosting of web sites by content providers, in most cases, however, is supported by placing advertisements on the web page. Much the same way as the Internet content providers' service is paid by advertising, if there were avenues for the ISPs to generate advertisement revenues in the course of providing the Internet access to the users, the Internet access could also become free.

The current browsers do not allow any control or channel which by permanent default hyperlinks the user

with the ISP. Such a deficiency of the browsers of the prior art, leave no room for browsing time interaction of the subscribers with their ISPs. A real time visual interaction with the ISP through the browser, independent of the conventional browsing, will not only improve the customer service, but enhance the range of client services offered, but will make it possible for the ISPs to raise additional revenues by running sponsor advertisements. With the additional advertising revenue, an ISP can sponsor the Internet access to its subscribers at a very subsidized cost or at no cost to them.

The present invention provides one such break through avenue to the ISPs for generating significant advertisement revenue, at the same time improving the quality of customer service. As a consequence of practical implementation of the present invention, the user can get good quality, user-friendly Internet access almost free of charge.

Internet is the fastest growing medium in the history. Internet advertising began in 1994, when the first banner ads were sold, and the first commercially available Web browser, Netscape Navigator 1.0, was released (November 1994). In a recent study, the adoption rate of the Internet, was compared with the three other major "new media" invented this century: radio, network television and cable TV. While the TV and radio took 13 years and 38 years respectively to reach 50 million U.S. users, the Internet achieved it in just 5 years. The Internet demographics are a marketer's dream. Net users are young, well educated and earn high incomes.

In a co-owned application entitled "Method And System For Displaying Messages In Non-Obtrusive Areas Of A Graphical Interface For A Software Application," a method and system of displaying sponsor messages in floating windows in any software application is described. This invention enables a person of ordinary skill in the art, to create floating windows in a web browser application for displaying the sponsor messages.

Another problem with sponsor-provided Internet access is to prevent the user from connecting to the ISP using a browser without the sponsor window, and using the services without viewing the sponsor messages. This uncertainty whether the users are watching the sponsor messages or not, will discourage the advertisers from buying advertising spaces. The present invention provides further improvements to the floating windows technology of the previous invention and provides a commercially viable product in Internet advertising business.

There is significant prior art in the field of conventional web advertising. From static banners to the interstitial full-blown multimedia animations (webmercials), web advertising has become very sophisticated. However, all such technological innovations in the field of web advertising are within the purview of the Internet content providers and the ISPs have very little or no scope of utilizing such prior art in generating advertisement revenue.

Some ISPs have tried various means of subsidizing or eliminating the user cost of accessing the Internet. In most European countries the local phone calls are charged

by the minute, and in most cases the telephone charges are much higher than the cost of accessing the Internet, which is about 1 cent per minute. In UK there are about 70 ISPs providing free Internet access to their subscribers. In France where the local telephone call costs anywhere between 1.5 cents through 4.7 cents per minute, the concept of free ISP is fast catching up. In such cases the telephone companies subsidize the telephone charges and refund the money to the ISPs, which in turn pass on the savings to their subscribers.

In the U.S. where the local calls are mostly free, the ISPs are generating revenues by providing subscriber demographic data to advertisers for focused advertising. A few have cropped up in the recent months using various modes of displaying sponsor advertisements, such as a compulsory tour of sponsor web sites before free browsing, or ad displays outside the browser application or within the browser application, masking areas, without any recourse to the user to make up for the lost functionality of the browser. Such approaches are neither user friendly, nor they functionally compensate the user's lost functionality.

Pirani and Ekedal (U.S. Patent No. 5105184) for the first time described a method to integrate advertisements in software applications. However the disclosure of Pirani and Ekedal does not enable Web based online advertising model. Goldscheider and Konle in their invention of a system for the transmission and display of visual information described in Patent No. WO 97/06636 issued on February 2, 1997, disclose a method for displaying advertisements on to the user's screen area

from where the user can order the product or service advertised. They also suggest that such advertisement revenue can subsidize the cost of Internet access. But their invention fails to describe any means of assuring
5 that the user does not avoid seeing the advertisement. This is essential, as advertisers would not want to pay for the unscrupulous use of the free or subsidized use of the Internet services, if their ads are not watched or seen voluntarily by the users. Secondly, Goldscheider
10 and Konle also fail to show that such advertisement window retains the focus by permanent default, which is very important for assuring that the window display messages are visible to the user. Thirdly, they further fail to show a user-friendly way of getting around the
15 window for accessing the information masked by such window.

Very recently NetZero, Inc., a free ISP became the first free ISP to attract approximately 1.7 million subscribers in less than a year. Alta Vista, a leading
20 content provider also became a free ISP. There are other Companies like Tritium Network, Freei.Net, etc. which are providing free Internet access. All of these companies are following more or less the same approach. They run an ad strip, which is displayed on the screen either
25 blocking a functional area of the user's browser application or reducing the browsing window size of the users browser application. None of these approaches of prior art integrate the ad display within the architecture of a browser application, allow automatic
30 user access to areas covered by the ad display, without having to manually move the ad window, use all of the

substrate areas (about 30% of the total pixel space) for displaying ISP-controlled messages, or create more than one such sponsor information displaying windows.

Conventional browsers basically provide an interface
5 between the user and the Web. None of such browsers of prior art provide an interface between the user and the ISP, which is of significant importance in enhancing the quality of customer support on one hand, and on the other, raising decent advertisement revenue for bringing
10 good quality sponsored Internet access to the users. From these examples, it will be seen that an interface between the user and the Web of a conventional browser, and the ad display approaches of the prior art, fail to provide certain types of functionality, which could make
15 Internet access free and truly a user-friendly, unrestricted media of the masses, at par with the radio and television. Accordingly, there is a need for a user interface that is free of such limitations.

20 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The browser of the present invention comprises a dialer module, a browsing module and a floating window module. The dialer has unique features, which allow only browser-specific connectivity with the ISP. The user
25 cannot access the Internet using any browser other than the browser of the present invention. This assures the continued display of the sponsor messages during the entire browsing session, and prevents unauthorized use of the sponsor-paid Internet services.

30 The browsing module allows all the conventional browsing functions. In addition, it codes the web site

URL of the Internet Service and Content Provider (ISCP), as a permanent default home page, which (may or may not) be changed by the user.

The floating window module comprises of one or more
5 floating windows, anchored to the substrate areas, which windows continuously display sponsor information and messages, and can neither be closed nor moved, nor lose focus. However, when the user accesses the menus, tools, controls etc. with the mouse cursor, in the substrate
10 areas, the floating windows disappear or move to a new location, and return as the cursor returns to the document window. Alternately such menus, tools, controls etc. can also be accessed by displaying them in the document area in response to a mouse or keyboard command
15 or combination. Hence the floating windows neither obstruct the normal display of the browsing window, nor compromise any of the browsing functions in the substrate areas.

The invention is preferably implemented in a
20 computer having a processor with a modem, an operating system, a graphical user interface and an HTTP-compliant browser, a telephone connection and an Internet access account. According to the preferred embodiment, there is described a method of browsing the World Wide Web of the
25 Internet using an HTML-compliant client, supporting a graphical user interface.

The method begins with the launch of the browser icon from the desktop, which opens up the dialer window. On the first launch the user needs to input certain
30 personal data and account information for setting up an account. On all subsequent launches the dialer uses the

user information to connect to the ISP server. Apart from the functions of a conventional dialer, the dialer of the present invention does the following, a) adds a prefix to the user name and password and b) assigns
5 default URL address to the floating windows for downloading the user specific files from the sponsor or ISP server. These functions allow the ISP server to recognize the permitted browsing interface and allow targeted delivery of sponsor information, messages,
10 advertisements.

As the dialer presents the user information to the local ISP server, the user name and password is authenticated, and the browser is launched. As the floating window and browsing window data is by permanent
15 default stored on the nonvolatile memory of the client machine, there is no delay in displaying these documents. As soon as the server is connected the displayed documents are updated, first the browsing window, then the user URL request and then the floating windows data
20 is updated in the background during the idling time of the browser. Hence the browsing window functions are prioritized over the floating window update downloads.

The user can use the browsing window in exactly the same way as any other conventional browser. During the
25 browsing mode, the user's concentration is in the browsing window and the substrate areas are covered by the floating windows displaying sponsor information. However the user can access the substrate area for using the menus, tools, controls etc. by simply moving the
30 cursor in the substrate areas. The floating window displays disappear as the cursor moves in, and reappear

as the cursor returns back to the browsing window. The preferred embodiment also enables the user to go to the sponsor web sites via the floating window URL link, by using keyboard, mouse-click combination. Alternately the
5 menus, tools, controls etc. can also be accessed by displaying such menus, tools, controls etc. in the browsing window by a mouse or keyboard or combination command.

It is an object of the invention to provide
10 multi-windows connectivity feature to a browser; at least one of such windows is by permanent default hyperlinked to the ISP. It is thus a primary object of the invention to enhance the operation and function of a web browser, by creating a floating windows interface, which enables
15 real time visual interaction with the ISP, without compromising any of the browsing functions of the browser. It is another more particular object of the invention to provide without interruption information to the subscriber, through one or more of such floating
20 window interface. Such information may include, without limitation, advertisements, webmercials, messages, notices or announcements from ISP, news, intra-company memos or messages between employees, receipt of an e-mail message, broadband video or television or some such
25 information.

It is also an object to assign ISCP (Internet Service and Content Provider) defined, uneditable ISCP URL addresses to the floating windows and the browsing window. On connecting, the floating windows download the
30 sponsor information/ad document from the ISCP host server, and the browsing window retrieves the ISCP home

page. In a preferred embodiment such sponsor information documents and ISCP home page documents are stored in the non-volatile memory area of the client machine, such as the disk memory. The disk memory also stores the browser
5 program of the present invention.

It is still another object of the invention to allow convenient automatic subscriber access to the tools, controls, menus etc. in the substrate areas of the browser, which are normally masked by the floating
10 windows interface of the present invention, either by cursor responsive access of the substrate area or display of the tools, controls, menus etc. in the browsing area.

It is also an object of the invention to assign permanent preferential focus and cursor-responsive
15 functionality to the floating windows during the entire login session, even if the user launches another application.

It is yet another object of the invention to enable subscriber to hyperlink to the web sites of the sponsor,
20 whose message; information advertisement is displayed in the floating window interface of present invention.

It is yet another object of the invention to allow only browser specific connectivity to the specific ISP, thereby preventing unscrupulous use of the ISP services
25 by using any other conventional browser. In one embodiment this can be done by automatic addition of at least two-digit browser code to the user password. Thus the server will handshake only with the prescribed browser client. In yet another embodiment, this can also
30 be achieved by the dialer module disconnecting the live Internet connection on the launch of the foreign browser.

It is a further object of the present invention to schedule the floating windows document download during the idling time of the browser.

It is also further object of the present invention
5 to provide an interface for display of broadband NTSC or some such television or video signals within the browser application, in a client machine integrated with a TV circuitry card. Such analog signals are first converted to RGB digital data via a conventional information
10 processing apparatus, and then displayed within the browser application outside the browsing window, in one of the floating windows. Such video signals may originate from broadcast television, cable television, or analog data input from a video cassette recorder, or
15 video laser disk player, or even a video camera located at some remote location, and such information processing apparatus comprise of a conventional add-in card that integrates full motion video and audio with personal computer, which is video-enhanced with a VGA or SVGA
20 graphics card.

It is also an object of the present invention to display TV-like multimedia ads referred to as Webmercials. It is also an object of the invention to deliver advertisements tailored to specific demographics,
25 to enhance the efficiency of the ad campaigns.

The foregoing summary of some of the more pertinent objects of the present invention should be construed to be merely illustrative of some of the more prominent features and applications of the invention. Many other
30 beneficial results can be attained by applying the disclosed invention in a different manner or modifying

the invention as will be described. Accordingly, a complete understanding of the invention may be had by referring to the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment.

5

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding of the present invention and its advantages, reference is now made to the following description taken in conjunction with the
10 accompanying figures in which like reference numbers indicate like features and wherein:

FIGURE 1 is a block diagram illustrating a web browser including a dialer module, a browsing module, and a floating window in accordance with a preferred
15 embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 2 is a diagram illustrating an upper floating window URL address for the browser of FIGURE 1 in accordance with the present invention;

FIGURE 3 is a flow diagram of a method for
20 displaying and updating information in the browser of FIGURE 1 by a preferred embodiment in accordance with the present invention;

FIGURE 4 shows schematically a method for user maneuvering of the floating windows to access the menus,
25 tools, and controls in substrate areas of the browser of FIGURE 1; and

FIGURE 5 shows schematically a method for user access to the sponsor web site via the sponsor information display in the floating windows of the
30 browser of FIGURE 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The preferred embodiment of the present invention is designed for a national or a multinational Internet Service and Content Provider (ISCP), who would distribute
5 the browser/software interface product of the present invention to the end users through the affiliate ISPs. The preferred embodiment is herein described in terms of the conventional dial up Internet connection protocol.

As represented in FIGURE 1, the preferred embodiment
10 of the World Wide Web browser of present invention comprises of three Modules identified as M1, M2 and M3 which provide multi-window connectivity capability. To access the World Wide Web, a user needs compatible hardware and a telephone connection (or any other means
15 like cable or satellite dish etc.) in addition to the browsing software for access to an Internet Service Provider (ISP). The Dialer Module M1 is launched when browser icon on the client desktop is clicked. The Dialer Module M1 includes automatic connection and
20 automatic disconnection functionality as well as dialer and account authentication functionality. In addition, the Dialer Module M1 may include a browser lock.

The Dialer Module M1 has a built in database of affiliate ISPs 10 for the user to select a local ISP 12.
25 Based on the selected local ISP 10, an ISP specific code 16 is generated by the user name prefix generator 14. In one embodiment, the user name prefix generator 14 is a multi-digit, ISP-specific, user name default prefix generator. When the user enters the user name and
30 password 18, the user name compiler 20, compiles a new user name by prefixing the ISP code 16 to the user name

18. The new user identity 22 thus generated is not known to the user and recognized only by the affiliate ISP terminal server 24, thus permitting a successful handshake and account authentication 26.

5 This feature of the Dialer Module M1 will allow account access exclusively by using the browser of the present invention, because the local ISP terminal server 24 recognizes only the compiled user ID 22, and not the one entered by the user 18. If the user accesses 36 the
10 account using a conventional foreign browser 30, the user ID 38 will be rejected 40, making it impossible to access the account using any browser other than the browser of the present invention. In the same way if the foreign browser 30 is launched 32 during the browsing session,
15 the auto disconnecter function 28 of the Dialer Module M1 will disconnect 34 the current browsing session to prevent parallel browsing through the foreign browser during a browsing session. The auto disconnect function 28 is also activated by browser login and browser logout.
20 These features of the Dialer Module M1 assure that the user's sponsored access, which is paid by the sponsor displays in the floating windows of the browser, is through only the browser of the present invention. Alternately this is also achieved by retaining the
25 overlay of floating windows on any application that is launched during a browsing session.

After the network connection is established the ISP terminal server 24 retrieves from the network servers 24A the requested documents, and feeds them to the Browsing
30 Module M2 and the Floating Windows Module M3. The Browsing Module M2 has bilateral interactive data input

and output operation through a primary browsing window and comprises the primary browsing window 42 and the supporting substrate area 46. The browsing window 42 displays by permanent default a portal web page 44, which
5 is ISCP assigned and cannot be changed by the user. The commonly accepted default screen size is 800 x 600 pixels, for a total of 480,000 square pixels, of which the browsing window usually takes up approximately 800 x 425 pixels, and the rest of the pixel space is taken up
10 by the upper and lower substrate areas. The upper substrate area is about twice the size of the lower substrate area. In the present invention the substrate areas are normally covered by the Floating Windows Module M3, displaying the sponsor information.

15 The Floating Window Module M3 is cyclic one way with sponsor information file transfer and display functionality. In a preferred embodiment the Floating Window Module M3 comprises floating windows 48 anchored to the upper 50 and lower 52 substrate areas of the
20 browser application.

In a particular embodiment, one or more of the floating windows is anchored to part or all of the substrate areas of the browser application, located outside the user-controlled document window, and
25 displayed by permanent default with the opening of the browser application, for either a pre-defined length of time or until the closing of the application.

The information displayed in the floating windows 50 and 52 are retrieved, updated and displayed according to
30 scheme outlined in FIGURE 2, FIGURE 3 and FIGURE 4. In particular, the floating windows masks all functions,

controls, tools and menus of the substrate area during
cursor activity in the browsing window and exposes such
controls, tools and menus either when the cursor is moved
into the substrate area or response to mouse, keyboard or
5 combination commands.

The program algorithm assures that the floating
windows remain open and active as long as the client
machine is connected to the LISP. It further assures
that the dialer disconnects the Internet connection if
10 any other browser.exe file is opened, making sure that
Internet access is not possible simultaneously with an
alternate browser program installed in the client
machine. Alternately the uninterrupted display of
floating windows is also assured by designing such
15 windows to remain on top of any and all applications
simultaneously launched.

A typical server 24 and 24A operates a so-called
"web site" which supports files in the form of documents
and pages. The "World Wide Web" (WWW) is a collection of
20 servers of the Internet, which utilize the Hypertext
Transfer Protocol (HTTP). HTTP is a known application
protocol that provides users access to files (which can
be in different formats such as text, graphics, images,
sound, video, etc.) using a standard page description
25 language known as Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). In
this embodiment, the primary browsing window of the
browser is HTTP-compliant for displaying the user-
requested web pages from a remote server.

A network path to a server is identified by a
30 so-called Uniform Resource Locator or URL having a known
syntax for defining a network connection. The URL

address defines the server and the specific page on the web site hosted by that server. Upon such specification, the client makes a TCP/IP request to the server identified in the URL link and receives a web page. The
5 floating window displays follow a similar web page download protocol.

In a particular embodiment, the sponsor messages are displayed in HTML or other suitable formats downloaded to non-volatile memory of the client machine from a remote
10 server hosting web pages with sponsor messages in response to an ISCP assigned user-specific default URL, or a program generates a site-specific URL. The display content of the floating window includes HTML, JavaScript format, imbedded real video, or other graphic format,
15 which can be clicked-through to the sponsor website via a URL link, by a keyboard command or by keyboard mouse command combination. The Internet bandwidth may be accessed via a non-dialup broadband cable modem or other connection. The client machine may be a television or a
20 hand-held mobile telecommunication device. The floating windows may display online or offline.

FIGURE 2 illustrates the components of the URL address assigned to each floating window based on the information entered by the user. The floating window URL
25 address is construed by the program algorithm and has file download protocol 50A, domain name of the ISCP 50B, root directory 50C of the ISCP web site, location of the sponsored ad in the floating window 50D, identification of the local ISP 50E and user profile options 50F. The
30 root directory 50C of the ISCP web site host the pages containing the sponsor ads, for display in the floating

windows. The location of the sponsor ad in the floating window e.g. topl 50D delivers the ad message to the left portion of the upper substrate area of the browser display. The identification (dial up telephone number) of the local ISP for geographical area-specific content delivery e.g. 16172731494 50E downloads the sponsor ads located on the ISCP server targeted for Boston area residents. The user profile options 50F entered by the user on signing up for the service. This sixth level URL name, programs more than one options for the specific user such as sex, age, profession, income etc., allowing variation in subject matter of the content delivery.

The programming codes for the first four address components of the floating windows URL are built into the browser program by the software manufacturer/ISCP, which can not be changed at the run time execution of the software program of the present invention. The fifth and sixth address components are automatically assigned by the dialer and account setup functions of the browser, which can change only with the change in the local Internet service provider (LISP) and change in the user profile. The final destination of the floating windows' default URL is therefore ISCP defined, and therefore assures targeted content delivery to focused user groups. This is particularly important in tailoring advertisements to specific demographics, thereby achieving high click-through rates.

The floating windows display sponsor information, that may carry high end graphics, multimedia animations and even videos and audios, which will be updated frequently. In a particular embodiment, one of the

floating windows may be an interface for the display of broadcast television, cable television, or data input from a video cassette recorder or video laser disk player or a video camera located at a remote location. Such information requires comparatively larger file size, thereby requiring longer download time. The preferred embodiment of the present invention adopts a file download and file update strategies, which not only efficiently downloads the floating window information from the corresponding server, but also reduces the net document download time of the browsing window.

FIGURE 3 is a flow diagram of steps performed in displaying and updating information by a preferred embodiment in accordance with the present invention. The ISCP gateway 44 and other common portal pages, as also the floating windows introductory information 50 and 52, are permanently saved on the resident memory 60 of the client machine. As such, when the user launches the browser of the present invention by clicking the desktop browser icon 54, the corresponding content files are instantly retrieved 58 from the resident memory 60 and instantly displayed in the browsing window 62 as well as the floating windows 62A. Hence in contrast to the conventional browsers, there is no delay time in display of the contents.

While the contents are already displayed the affiliate ISP server is contacted 64, and after the user ID authentication 66, the connection is established 68. As the connection is established the content files are updated via the corresponding URL address 70 and 70A. While the updates of the contents of the browsing window

takes preference 70, the update of the floating window content 70A and the corresponding resident memory data 70A takes place only in the background during the idling time of the browser. In this way, data output of the floating window is continuously and exclusively controlled and automatically updated intermittently in the background, during the browsing idling time from the ISCP server via the default URL. In addition to the most portal sites, the resident memory also stores the most frequently visited pages based on the browsing pattern of the user. Thus the data download and updating scheme of the present invention not only further improvises the browsing speed of the browser, but also saves the bandwidth.

The floating windows of the present invention, neither can be closed by the user, nor can be browsed for displaying any web site other than the one defined by the permanent default URL. The only manipulation of these floating windows possible by the user, is their disappearance by moving the mouse pointer in the substrate area of the browser application. The user thus can access the substrate area for working with the menus, controls, tools etc. without any obstruction by the floating windows.

FIGURE 4 shows three screens depicting schematically a functional overview of the preferred embodiment and particularly shows the user maneuvering of the floating windows to access the substrate areas. The floating window can neither be closed, moved, manipulated nor interacted with any other way than defined by the browser without closing the application. The floating window

never loses focus and continues to display the sponsor messages irrespective of the application launched.

During normal browsing when the cursor is in the browsing window 72, the floating windows cover the
5 substrate areas (Screen 1). There are absolutely no obstructions in the user browsability or loss of any functionality of the browser. The user can access all the control, tools, menus etc. by simply moving the cursor 72 in the upper substrate area 74, which exposes
10 the upper substrate area (Screen 2). In the same manner simply moving the cursor 72 in the lower substrate area 76 (Screen 3) can access the lower substrate area.

A very important feature of web advertising is the interactive ability. The user can click on a web
15 advertisement and can either complete a transaction then and there, or go to the sponsor web site to initiate a transaction or get more information. The preferred embodiment of the present invention retains this quality of a web advertisement, and allows access to the sponsor
20 web site for further transaction, as schematically illustrated in FIGURE 5.

In a preferred embodiment the user can go to the sponsor web site via the sponsor information display by moving the mouse cursor while pressing the control key.
25 The floating window does not disappear. While in the floating window the user can use a left mouse click and control key combination 78 to activate the sponsor URL link 80 to download the sponsor web page from the host server 82 and display the same in the browsing window 84.
30 Alternately, other commands that the user can execute through the floating windows in accessing the sponsor web

site are single keyboard commands, such as F1, F2 etc. URLs for sponsor web pages can also be represented by placing corresponding buttons on the right upper corner or (any appropriate location) of the browser substrate
5 area.

In another preferred embodiment the menus, tools, controls etc. can be conveniently accessed from within the browsing window by a right mouse click, which launches a Java applet displaying the menus, tools,
10 controls etc. without disrupting the display of the floating window. In such an embodiment the browsing window may or may not have the substrate areas.

While the invention is described in terms of the preferred embodiments as used by a specific conventional
15 ISP, however, an adaptation of the preferred embodiment can be used to provide sponsor paid Internet access independent of the ISP and/or a free access browser interface. In other words the features of the preferred embodiment can be further enhanced to enable the sponsor
20 paid access, irrespective of which ISP to which the user subscribes. Such an enhancement to the preferred embodiment is achieved by adding a fourth module, the User Access Monitoring and Accounting Module (UAMAM).

The UAMAM is a portal website of the free access
25 browser interface provider. When the user logs in the Internet Interface Provider's (IIP) portal site, the user is identified by the user name and password either entered in the dialer or directly on the portal site. The portal site brings up the user's updated account
30 status, and opens a timer which times the duration of the Internet access until the connection is snapped. The

total time of each browsing session is added to the account of each user in the portal site database. The user account database maintains a complete record of the user's browsing activity. The IIP thus can estimate the
5 total monthly browsing time of each user. Based on the prevalent Internet access rates in the geographic region, the IIP either pays to the user's ISP or directly credits the amount to the user. Thus the preferred embodiments of the present invention can not only enable sponsor paid
10 Internet access to the user through the ISP, but also independent of an ISP as an Internet Interface Provider (IIP).

Although the invention has been described in terms of a preferred embodiment, those skilled in the art will
15 recognize that various modifications of the invention can be practiced within the spirit and scope of the appended claims. For example, in one particular embodiment, the method can be implemented as a stand alone software algorithm working in conjunction with a conventional
20 browser such as Internet explorer or Netscape installed on the client machine. In such a method the embodiment comprises of the dialer module and the floating windows module only and uses the browsing interface of the installed browser.

25 In a variation of the preferred embodiment the floating window displaying continuous sponsor messages may also contain applets for menus, tools, controls or such information, which can be swapped using the mouse or keyboard key. In another variation of this embodiment,
30 the floating window continuously displays sponsor messages in a defined area outside and tiled with the

open application window. These sponsor messages are in the form of data, voice or video files.

In still another variation of the preferred embodiment the when the Internet is accessed via a non-dial up, high speed broadband mode, the dialer/account authenticator module performs no dial up function. In yet another variation the client machine is a television.

In another example the Internet access is substantiated with the real time access to the television and radio broadcast within the floating window interface. In yet another embodiment of the present invention the floating window is a means of real time communication between employees of a company or institution or a chat group. In yet another embodiment it provides an interface for a mail client, a facsimile transmission client or a data back up service. In still another embodiment it displays real time news, commentaries etc.

In yet another embodiment at least one of the floating windows functions as instant 24-hour access to the customer support department of the ISP. In yet another embodiment the entire top substrate area can be used to display up to 800 X 120 pixel size panoramic multimedia webmercial containing life like animations, audio and even videos. In still another embodiment the floating window of the present invention is used for real time video conferencing with a single or multiple destinations simultaneously.

Several embodiments of the present invention are specifically illustrated and described herein. However, it will be appreciated that modifications and variations

of the present invention are covered by the above teachings. While the preferred embodiments of the present invention have been illustrated in detail, it should be apparent that modifications and adaptations to
5 those embodiments may occur to one skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the present invention as set forth in the following claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for providing sponsored Internet access, comprising:

providing a graphical user interface for a browser,
5 the graphical user interface including a browsing window
and a sponsor window;

allowing a user to establish a connection with the
browser to an Internet Service Provider (ISP);

displaying sponsor information in the sponsor window
10 during user browsing over the connection; and

automatically updating the sponsor information over
the connection during user browsing.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

15 providing the graphical user interface including the
browser window and a plurality of sponsor windows;

displaying sponsor information in each of the
sponsor windows; and

automatically updating sponsor information for at
20 least one of the sponsor windows over the connection
during user browsing.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
window is a cursor-responsive window.

25

4. The method of Claim 2, further comprising
locally storing sponsor information downloaded over the
connection for display in the sponsor window.

5. The method of Claim 4, further comprising:
upon initiation of the browser, retrieving locally-
stored sponsor information; and
displaying the locally-stored sponsor information in
5 the sponsor window.

6. The method of Claim 1, further comprising
automatically updating sponsor information over the
connection in the background during user browsing.

10

7. The method of Claim 1, wherein the ISP is
associated with the sponsor and the connection is free to
the user, further comprising automatically terminating
the connection between the browser and the ISP in
15 response to detecting a launch of a foreign browser.

8. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
window is linked to a sponsor information site containing
sponsor information, further comprising automatically
20 downloading sponsor information from the sponsor
information site.

9. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
window is hyperlinked to a sponsor web site containing
25 sponsor information, further comprising automatically
downloading sponsor information from the sponsor web
site.

10. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
30 window is permanently hyperlinked to a sponsor
information site containing sponsor information.

11. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor window is a floating window anchored within a browser window including the browsing window and the sponsor
5 window.

12. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor window comprises a sponsor uniform resource locator (URL) address to a site containing sponsor information for
10 display in the sponsor window.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the URL identifies a download protocol for updating the sponsor information and a domain of the site.
15

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the URL further identifies a directory at the domain containing the sponsor information.

20 15. The method of Claim 12, wherein the graphical user interface includes a plurality of sponsor windows and the URL further identifies one of the sponsor window for displaying sponsor information from the site.

25 16. The method of Claim 12, wherein the URL further comprises a geographic location identifier for the user.

17. The method of Claim 12, wherein the URL further comprises profile information for the user.
30

18. The method of Claim 1, further comprising maintaining the sponsor window in permanent focus during user browsing.

5 19. The method of Claim 1, further comprising maintaining the sponsor window in permanent focus during the connection between the browser and the ISP.

20. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
10 information comprises targeted information for the user.

21. The method of Claim 1, wherein the ISP is associated with the sponsor and the connection is free to the user, further comprising:

15 validating browsers attempting to connect to the ISP; and

allowing the user to establish the connection to the ISP with a browser having a graphical user interface including the sponsor window.

20

22. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor window is a floating window operable to mask a substrate area providing controls for the browsing window and operable to expose the substrate area in response to at
25 least one specified user command.

23. The method of Claim 1, wherein the ISP is associated with the sponsor and the connection is free to the user, further comprising:

30 generating an encrypted user identifier (ID) based on a user identifier received by the browser; and

allowing the user to establish the connection to the ISP with the browser upon validating the encrypted user ID at the ISP.

5 24. The method of Claim 1, further comprising allowing the user to complete a transaction from the sponsor information displayed in the sponsor window.

10 25. The method of Claim 1, further comprising allowing the user to connect to a sponsor website through the sponsor information displayed in the sponsor window.

15 26. The method of Claim 1, further comprising displaying the sponsor information continuously in the sponsor window.

27. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:
determining a cost for the connection to the ISP;
a sponsor of the sponsor information refunding the
20 cost of the connection to the ISP.

28. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises advertisements.

25 29. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises webmercials.

30. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises messages.

31. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises notices.

32. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
5 information comprises announcements.

33. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises news.

10 34. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises intra-company memos between employees of a company.

35. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
15 information comprises intra-company messages between employees of a company.

36. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
information comprises broadband video.
20

37. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises television signals.

38. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
25 information comprises video signals.

39. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises advertisements tailored to specific demographics of the user.

40. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises real-time television.

41. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
5 information comprises real-time radio.

42. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises real-time communications.

10 43. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises electronic mail.

44. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises facsimiles.

15 45. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises customer support information of a sponsor.

20 46. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor information comprises real-time video conferencing with at least one destination.

47. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sponsor
25 information comprises real-time video conferencing with multiple destinations.

48. The method of Claim 1, wherein the ISP is the sponsor.

49. The method of Claim 1, wherein the user establishes a free connection with the browser to the ISP affiliated with a sponsor.

5 50. The method of Claim 4, wherein the sponsor information is stored in non-volatile memory of a device running the browser.

10 51. The method of Claim 1, wherein the ISP is associated with the sponsor and the connection is free to the user, further comprising automatically displaying the sponsor window on top of an application active during the connection.

15 52. The method of Claim 51, further comprising automatically displaying the sponsor window on top of all applications launched during the connection.

20 53. The method of Claim 51, wherein the application is a foreign browser.

54. The method of Claim 1, further comprising displaying the sponsor window continuously during the connection.

25

55. The method of Claim 54, wherein the sponsor window is a cursor-responsive window.

56. A method for targeting advertising to an Internet user, comprising:

gathering personal information from a user over an Internet connection;

5 downloading over the Internet connection targeted advertisements to a user device for display to the user based on the personal information; and

displaying the targeted advertisements to the user in a dedicated window of a graphical user interface of an application during use of the application.

10

57. The method of Claim 56, further comprising displaying the targeted advertisements to the user in a plurality of dedicated windows of the graphical user interface.

15

58. The method of Claim 56, wherein the dedicated window is a cursor-responsive window.

20 59. The method of Claim 56, further comprising storing the targeted advertisements on the client device.

60. The method of Claim 56, further comprising:
gathering personal information from the user in
response to use by the user of a sponsored-provided
Internet browser;

5 allowing the user to establish a free Internet
connection with the sponsored-provided Internet browser;
and

 displaying the targeted advertisements to the user
in the decided window of the sponsored-provided Internet
10 browser during use of the sponsored-provided Internet
browser.

61. The method of Claim 56, further comprising
downloading the targeted advertisements to the user
15 device in the background during user browsing.

62. The method of Claim 56, wherein the dedicated
window comprises a link to a sponsor site containing the
targeted advertisements, further comprising automatically
20 downloading the targeted advertisements to the user
device from the sponsor site.

63. The method of Claim 56, wherein the dedicated
window is a floating window anchored to an application
25 window.

64. The method of Claim 56, wherein the dedicated
window comprises a uniform resource locator (URL) address
to a sponsor site containing targeted advertisement for
30 display in the dedicated window.

65. The method of Claim 64, wherein the URL identifies a download protocol for updating the targeted advertising and a domain of the sponsor site.

5 66. The method of Claim 65, wherein the URL further identifies a directory of the domain containing the targeted advertisements

67. The method of Claim 64, wherein the URL further
10 comprises a geographic location identifier for the user.

68. The method of Claim 64, wherein the URL further comprises profile information for the user.

15 69. The method of Claim 56, further comprising maintaining the dedicated window in permanent focus during use of the application.

70. The method of Claim 56, further comprising
20 allowing the user to complete a transaction from the targeted advertisements displayed in the dedicated window.

71. The method of Claim 56, further comprising
25 allowing the user to connect to a sponsor web site through the targeted advertisements displayed in the dedicated window.

72. The method of Claim 56, further comprising
30 displaying the targeted advertisements continuously in the dedicated window.

73. The method of Claim 56, wherein the targeted advertisements comprise webmercials.

5 74. The method of Claim 56, wherein the targeted advertisements comprise broadband video.

75. The method of Claim 59, further comprising displaying the sponsor window on top of a user
10 application when the user is offline.

76. The method of Claim 75, further comprising serving sponsor information locally from the client device for display in the sponsor window on top of the
15 user application.

77. A method for controlling sponsored Internet access, comprising:

providing a browser having a primary browsing window for user browsing of the Internet and a sponsor window
5 for displaying information of a sponsor;

transmitting an identifier for the browser to an Internet service provider (ISP) affiliated with the sponsor for authentication;

establishing an Internet connection between the
10 browser and the ISP upon authentication of the identifier;

allowing the user to browse the Internet over the Internet connection; and

displaying information of the sponsor in the sponsor
15 window during user browsing over the Internet connection.

78. The method of Claim 77, further comprising automatically terminating the Internet connection upon launch of a foreign browser during the Internet
20 connection.

79. The method of Claim 77, wherein the identifier is encrypted from the user further comprising:

receiving a user identifier; and
25 generating the identifier for the browser based on the user identifier.

80. The method of Claim 79, wherein the identifier is encrypted from the user further comprising:

receiving an ISP identifier; and

generating the identifier for the browser based on
5 the user identifier and the ISP identifier.

81. The method of Claim 79, wherein the user identifier comprises a user name and password.

10 82. The method of Claim 77, further comprising automatically updating the sponsor information over the Internet connection during user browsing.

83. The method of Claim 77, further comprising
15 automatically updating the sponsor information over the Internet connection in the background during user browsing.

84. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor
20 window is a cursor-responsive window.

85. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor window is hyperlinked to a sponsor web site containing the sponsor information, further comprising automatically
25 downloading the sponsor information from the sponsor web site for display in the sponsor window.

86. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor window is a floating window anchored within a browser window including the primary browsing window and the sponsor window.

5

87. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor window comprises a sponsor uniform resource locator (URL) address to a site containing sponsor information for display in the sponsor window.

10

88. The method of Claim 87, wherein the URL identifies a download protocol for updating the sponsor information and a domain of the site.

15

89. The method of Claim 88, wherein the URL further identifies a directory at the domain containing the sponsor information.

90. The method of Claim 87, wherein the browser includes a plurality of sponsor windows and the URL further identifies one of the sponsor windows for displaying sponsor information from the site.

91. The method of Claim 87, wherein the URL further comprises a geographic location identifier for the user.

92. The method of Claim 87, wherein the URL further comprises profile information for the user.

93. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor information comprises targeted information for the user.

94. The method of Claim 77, further comprising allowing the user to complete a transaction from the sponsor information displayed in the sponsor window.

5

95. The method of Claim 77, further comprising allowing the user to connect to a sponsor web site through the sponsor information displayed in the sponsor window.

10

96. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor information comprises advertisements.

97. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor
15 information comprises webmercials.

98. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor information comprises broadband video.

20 99. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor information comprises advertisements tailored to specific demographics of the user.

100. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor
25 information comprises customer support information of the sponsor.

101. The method of Claim 77, wherein the user
establishes a free connection with the browser to the
30 Internet service provider affiliated with the sponsor.

102. The method of Claim 77, wherein the sponsor information is stored in non-volatile memory in a device running the browser.

5 103. The method of Claim 77, further comprising displaying the sponsor window on top of an application launched during the Internet connection.

10 104. The method of Claim 103, wherein the application is a foreign browser.

15 105. The method of Claim 77, further comprising displaying the sponsor window continuously during the Internet connection.

106. The method of Claim 105, wherein the sponsor window is a cursor-responsive window.

107. A system for controlling sponsored Internet access, comprising:

a browser having a primary browsing window for user browsing of the Internet and a sponsor window for
5 displaying information of a sponsor;

means for transmitting an identifier for the browser to an Internet service provider (ISP) affiliated with the sponsor for authentication;

means for establishing an Internet connection
10 between the browser and the ISP upon authentication of the identifier;

means for allowing the user to browse the Internet over the Internet connection; and

means for displaying information of the sponsor in
15 the sponsor window during user browsing over the Internet connection.

108. The system of Claim 107, further comprising means for automatically terminating the Internet connection upon launch of a foreign browser during the
20 Internet connection.

109. The system of Claim 107, wherein the identifier is encrypted from the user further comprising:

means for receiving a user identifier; and

means for generating the identifier for the browser
25 based on the user identifier.

110. The system of Claim 109, further comprising:
means for receiving an ISP identifier; and
means for generating the identifier for the browser
based on the user identifier and the ISP identifier.

5

111. The system of Claim 109, wherein the user
identifier comprises a user name and password.

112. The system of Claim 107, further comprising
10 means for automatically updating the sponsor information
over the Internet connection during user browsing.

113. The system of Claim 107, further comprising
means for automatically updating the sponsor information
15 over the Internet connection in the background during
user browsing.

114. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor
window is a cursor-responsive window.

20

115. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor
window is hyperlinked to a sponsor web site containing
the sponsor information, further comprising means for
automatically downloading the sponsor information from
25 the sponsor web site for display in the sponsor window.

116. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor
window is a floating window anchored within a browser
window including the primary browsing window and the
30 sponsor window.

117. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor window comprises a sponsor uniform resource locator (URL) address to a site containing sponsor information for display in the sponsor window.

5

118. The system of Claim 117, wherein the URL identifies a download protocol for updating the sponsor information and a domain of the site.

10

119. The system of Claim 118, wherein the URL further identifies a directory at the domain containing the sponsor information.

120. The system of Claim 117, wherein the browser includes a plurality of sponsor windows and the URL further identifies one of the sponsor windows for displaying sponsor information from the site.

121. The system of Claim 117, wherein the URL further comprises a geographic location identifier for the user.

122. The system of Claim 117, wherein the URL further comprises profile information for the user.

25

123. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor information comprises targeted information for the user.

124. The system of Claim 107, further comprising means for allowing the user to complete a transaction

30

from the sponsor information displayed in the sponsor window.

125. The system of Claim 107, further comprising
5 means for allowing the user to connect to a sponsor web site through the sponsor information displayed in the sponsor window.

126. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor
10 information comprises advertisements.

127. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor information comprises webmercials.

15 128. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor information comprises broadband video.

129. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor information comprises advertisements tailored to specific
20 demographics of the user.

130. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor information comprises customer support information of the sponsor.

25

131. The system of Claim 107, wherein the user establishes a free connection with the browser to the ISP affiliated with the sponsor.

132. The system of Claim 107, wherein the sponsor information is stored in non-volatile memory in a device running the browser.

5 133. The system of Claim 107, further comprising means for displaying the sponsor window on top of an application launched during the Internet connection

134. The system of Claim 133, wherein the
10 application is a foreign browser.

135. The system of Claim 107, further comprising means for displaying the sponsor window continuously during the Internet connection

15

136. The system of Claim 135, wherein the sponsor window is a cursor-responsive window.

137. A system for controlling sponsored Internet access, comprising:

a computer readable medium: and

software stored on the computer readable medium, the
5 software comprising a browser having a primary browsing
window for user browsing of the Internet and a sponsor
window for displaying information of a sponsor and the
software operable to transmit an identifier for the
browser to an Internet service provider (ISP) affiliated
10 with the sponsor for authentication, establish an
Internet connection between the browser and the ISP upon
authentication of the identifier, allow the user to
browse the Internet over the Internet connection, and
display information of the sponsor in the sponsor window
15 during user browsing over the Internet connection.

138. The system of Claim 137, the software further
operable to automatically terminate the Internet
connection upon launch of a foreign browser during the
Internet connection.

20 139. The system of Claim 138, wherein the identifier
is encrypted from the user, the software further operable
to:

receive a user identifier; and

generate the identifier for the browser based on the
25 user identifier.

140. The system of Claim 139, the software further operable to:

receive an ISP identifier; and
generate the identifier for the browser based on the
5 user identifier and the ISP identifier.

141. The system of Claim 139, wherein the user identifier comprises a user name and password.

10 142. The system of Claim 137, the software further operable to automatically update the sponsor information over the Internet connection during user browsing.

143. The system of Claim 137, the software further
15 operable to automatically update the sponsor information over the Internet connection in the background during user browsing.

144. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor
20 window is a cursor-responsive window.

145. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor window is hyperlinked to a sponsor web site containing the sponsor information, the software further operable to
25 automatically download the sponsor information from the sponsor web site for display in the sponsor window.

146. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor window is a floating window anchored within a browser window including the primary browsing window and the sponsor window.

5

147. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor window comprises a sponsor uniform resource locator (URL) address to a site containing sponsor information for display in the sponsor window.

10

148. The system of Claim 147, wherein the URL identifies a download protocol for updating the sponsor information and a domain of the site.

15

149. The system of Claim 148, wherein the URL further identifies a directory at the domain containing the sponsor information.

150. The system of Claim 147, wherein the browser includes a plurality of sponsor windows and the URL further identifies one of the sponsor windows for displaying sponsor information from the site.

151. The system of Claim 147, wherein the URL further comprises a geographic location identifier for the user.

152. The system of Claim 147, wherein the URL further comprises profile information for the user.

30

153. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor information comprises targeted information for the user.

154. The system of Claim 137, the software further
5 operable to allow the user to complete a transaction from the sponsor information displayed in the sponsor window.

155. The system of Claim 137, the software further operable to allow the user to connect to a sponsor web
10 site through the sponsor information displayed in the sponsor window.

156. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor information comprises advertisements.
15

157. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor information comprises webmercials.

158. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor
20 information comprises broadband video.

159. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor information comprises advertisements tailored to specific demographics of the user.
25

160. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor information comprises customer support information of the sponsor.

161. The system of Claim 137, wherein the user establishes a free connection with the browser to the ISP affiliated with the sponsor.

5 162. The system of Claim 137, wherein the sponsor information is stored in non-volatile memory in a device running the browser.

10 163. The system of Claim 137, the software further operable to display the sponsor window on top of an application active during the Internet connection.

164. A propagated signal, comprising:

a transmission medium; and

a signal propagated on the transmission medium, the
signal comprising a domain name for a web side containing
5 sponsor information for display in a sponsor window of an
Internet browser, a directory at the web site having the
sponsor information, and an identifier of the sponsor
window in a main window of the browser.

10 165. The signal of Claim 164, wherein the identifier
of the sponsor window comprises a location of the sponsor
window in the main window.

166. The signal of Claim 164, the signal further
15 comprising profile information for a user of the Internet
browser.

167. The signal of Claim 166, the profile
information comprising at least one of an age, sex,
20 profession and income of the user.

168. The signal of Claim 164, wherein the web site
is an Internet service provider (ISP) web site.

25 169. The signal of Claim 164, the signal further
comprising a geographical area identifier.

170. The signal of Claim 169, the geographical area
identifier comprising a local Internet service provider
30 (ISP) identifier.

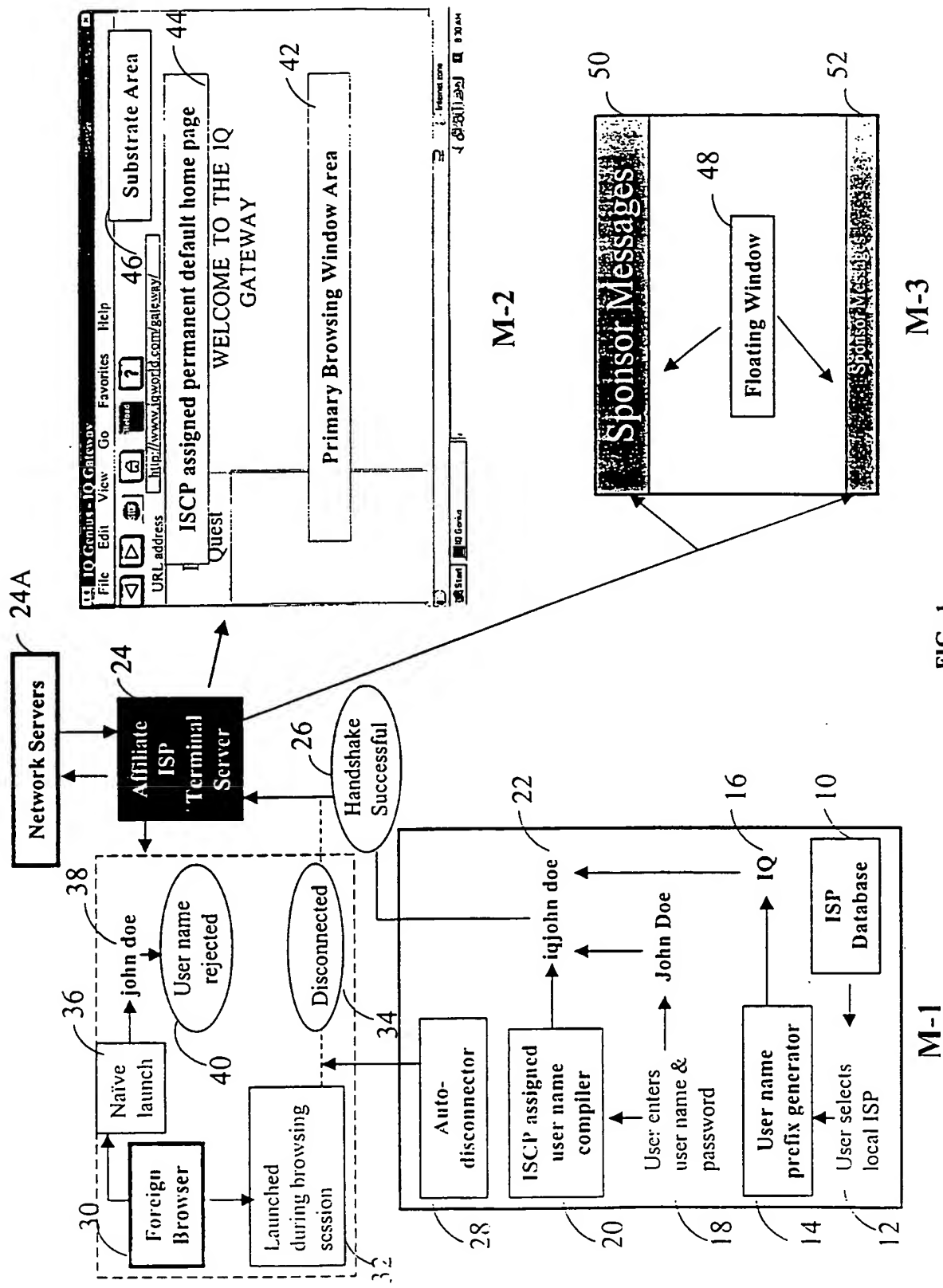


FIG. 1

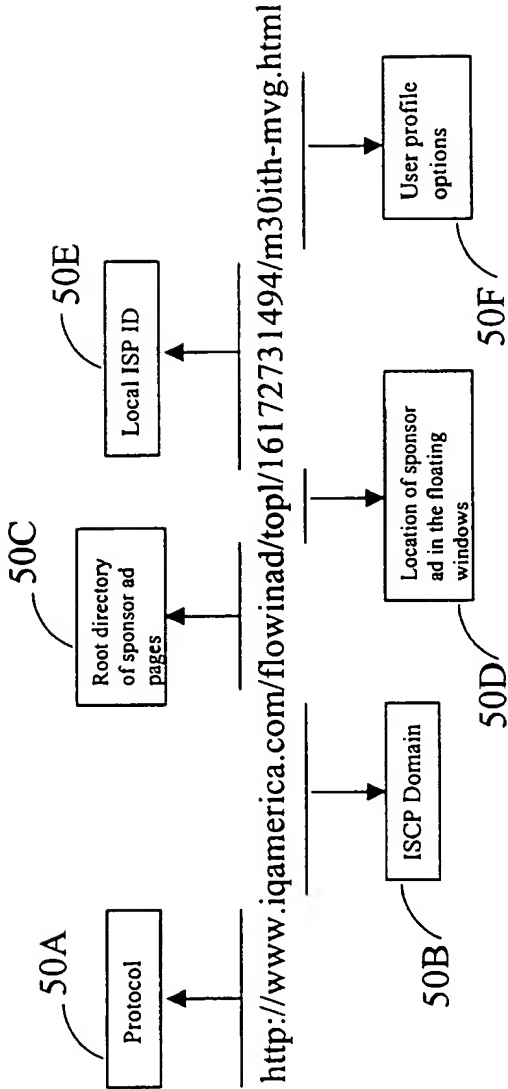


FIG. 2

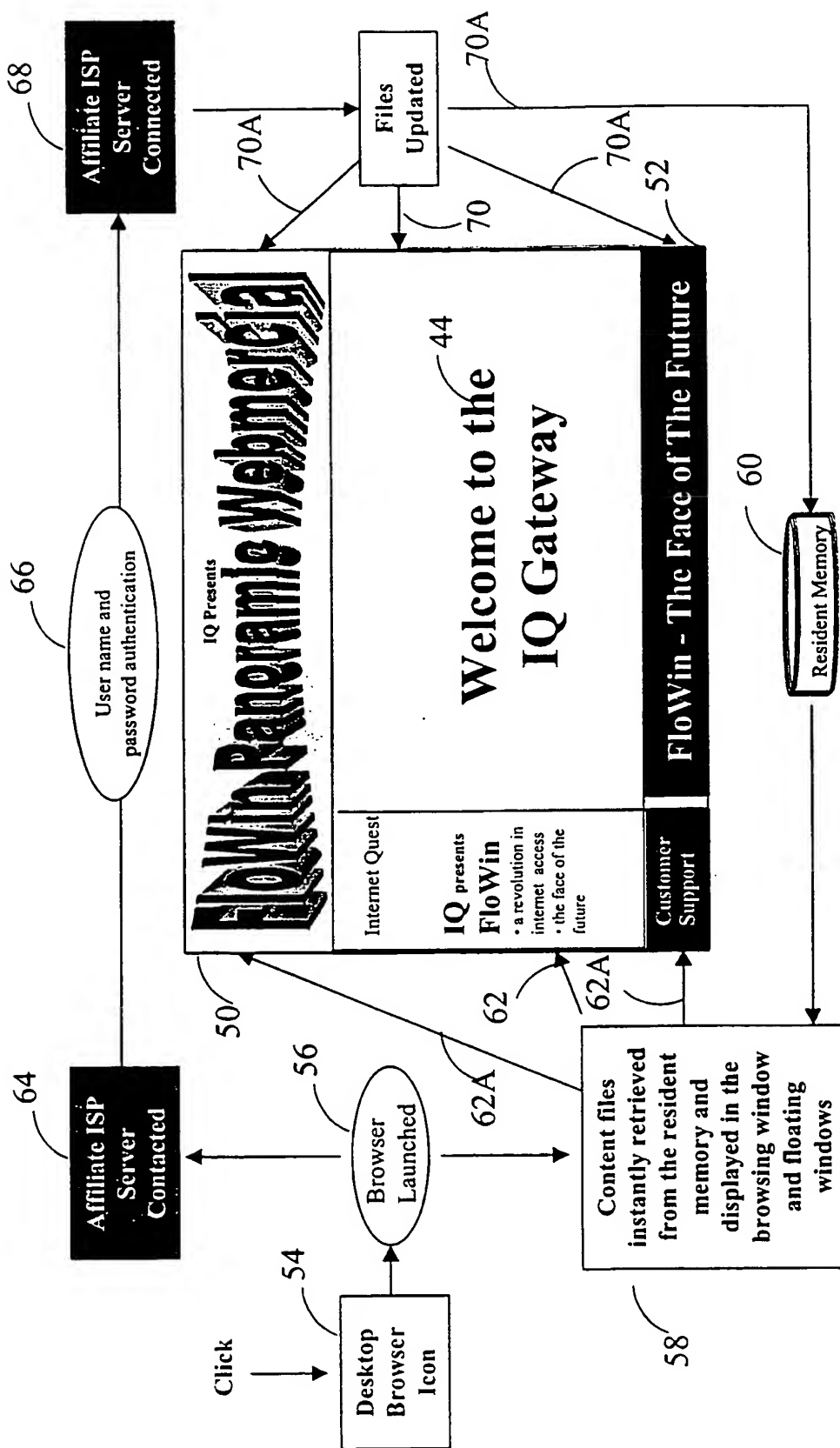


FIG. 3

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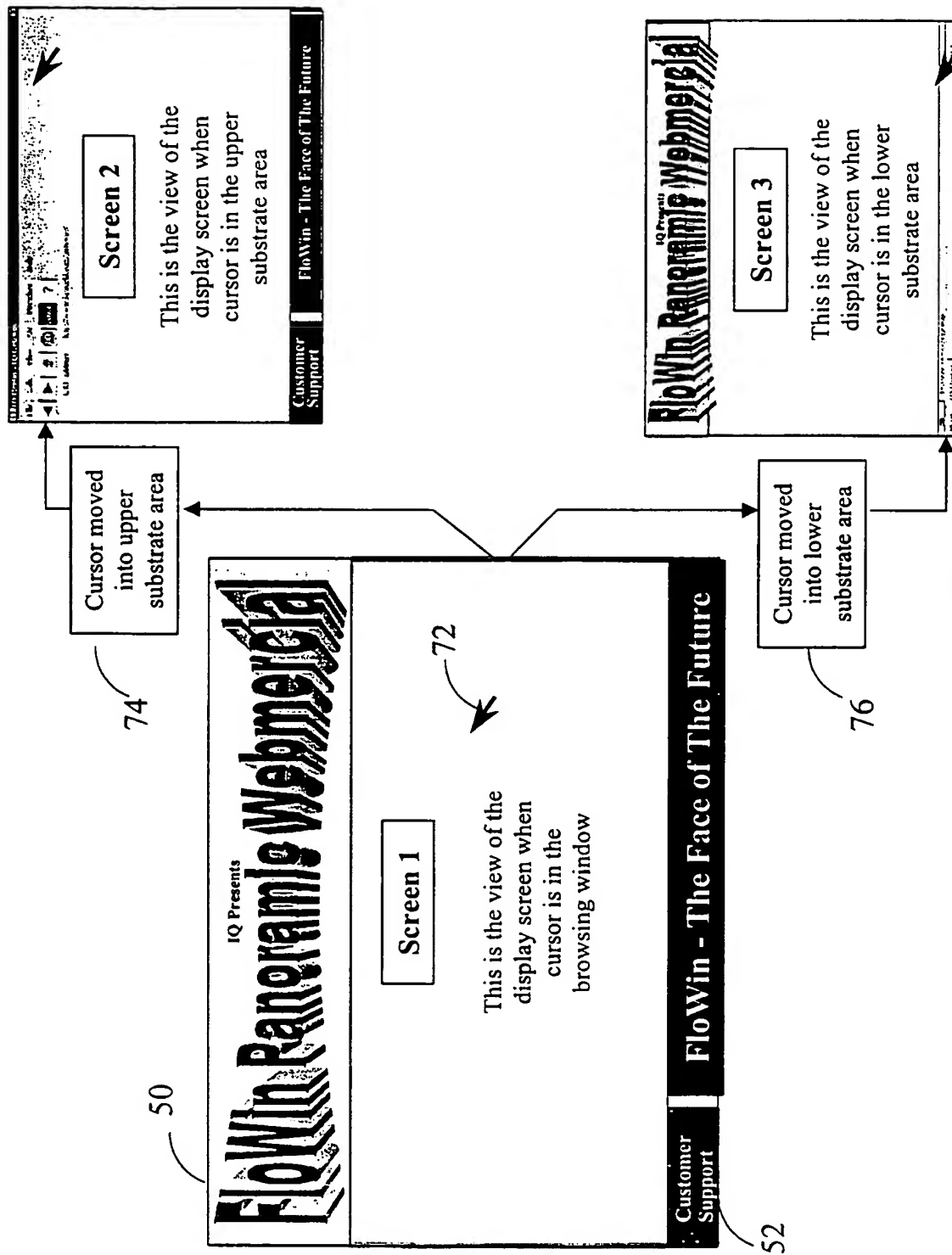


FIG. 4

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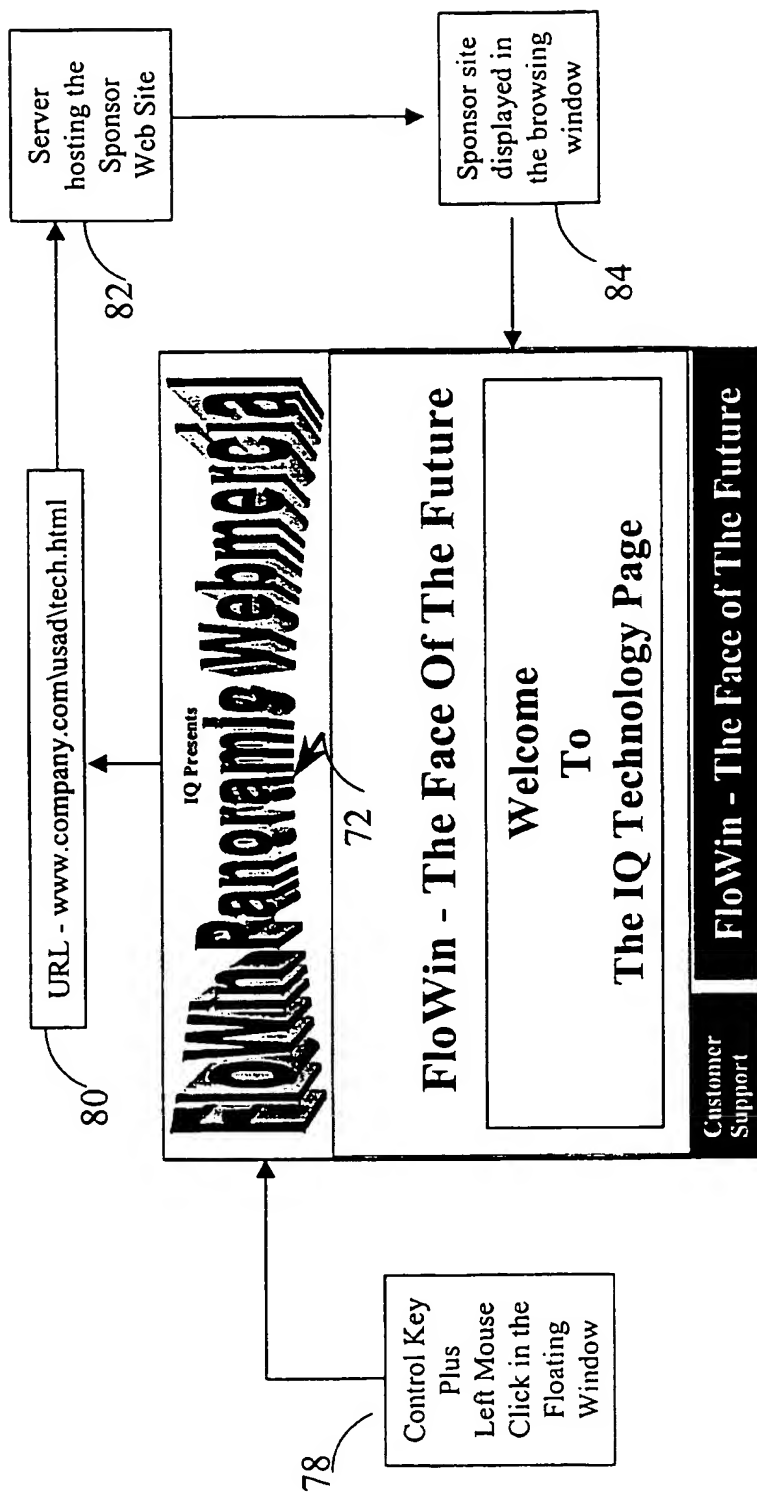


FIG. 5

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